

Upland, PA – A study done this summer found that about 300,000 of the 1.64 million Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) or major depression. As part of his work to help these individuals nationally and locally, Congressman Joe Sestak (PA-07) joined representatives from Give an Hour to promote locally a countrywide effort to care for troops who have fought in Iraq and Afghanistan. The Give an Hour program encourages mental health professionals to volunteer their services to these brave Americans, as approximately 40 percent of soldiers, a third of Marines, and half of the National Guard Members returning from Iraq and Afghanistan report psychological problems. —

“This organization provides critical assistance for our Veterans, including treatment for anxiety, depression, substance abuse, PTSD, traumatic brain injuries, and sexual health and intimacy concerns, as well as counseling for grieving families,” said Congressman Sestak. “I am taken by the ability of Give and Hour, with more than 2800 volunteers, to rally the medical community behind this great initiative and by the generosity expressed by the dozens of local doctors who have shown enthusiasm for helping the organization to meet its goals.”

The event outlined ways to participate for local mental health providers as well as service members, Veterans, and their families. Give an Hour Founder and President Dr. Barbara Romberg, a psychologist in the Washington, DC area, participated in a panel with the Congressman, as well as a Veteran of the war in Afghanistan, at Crozer-Chester Medical Center. Mental Health professionals from throughout the region attended to learn about Dr. Romberg’s endeavor. Individuals can register on the website, www.giveanhour.org, as either a health care provider or a visitor. Veterans sign up as visitors and search for someone in their region who has offered to help. They can then personally contact the provider to set up an appointment.

Give an Hour is a nonprofit organization that provides free services to U.S. military personnel and their families affected by the current conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan through the generosity of volunteers from the mental health community. The ultimate goal of the group is to engage ten percent of the nation’s licensed health professionals, or 40,000 people, to make mental health services more accessible to our country’s servicemen and women.

“Mental health issues are one of the biggest problems facing the men and women returning from active duty today,” said the Congressman, who after spending 31 years in the Navy has remained committed to assisting active duty personnel and Veterans. “As a former serviceman and now a representative, I believe it is my responsibility to work to ensure that all returning

Veterans receive the care they need and deserve.”

Partnering with Give an Hour builds on Congressman Sestak’s efforts in Washington to increase resources available to Veterans. As an example, the Military Construction-VA funding bill for fiscal year 2009 that the Congressman helped pass provides \$31 billion for Veterans' medical services, which is \$2.9 billion (9%) more than the current level and \$1.2 billion (3%) more than the administration's request.

Today’s presentation continued a series of local events in the last month and a half in which the Congressman has participated to speak with Veterans and those responsible for their care. Last month he hosted about a dozen Veterans under the age of 30 to discuss mental health treatment, housing, and educational, business and job opportunities. In addition, he toured the VA hospital in Philadelphia to meet with the Director and discuss the assistance his staff needs to provide appropriate care, particularly for the increasing incidences of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Soon after, Congressman Sestak visited the Coatesville facility, where he announced that he is pursuing legislation to reverse income limits that have prevented certain categories of Veterans from qualifying for health benefits.

Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for 31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, Joe was the first Director of "Deep Blue," the Navy's anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the "Global War on Terrorism." He served as President Clinton's Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Joe is the highest-ranking former military officer ever elected to the Congress.

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